

# **HARKIN STATEMENT ON SENATE FINANCE HEALTH REFORM PROPOSAL**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, today issued the following statement on the health reform proposal unveiled today by the Senate Finance Committee.

“In just the last week, the health reform debate has been reinvigorated. The President's address to the Joint Session of Congress explained to the American public in clear and concise terms why the status quo is not an option. It is now up to Congress to respond.

“Today, Chairman Baucus has unveiled a proposal that will be marked up in Committee next week. I applaud Chairman Baucus for his steadfast work to get to this point. The proposal outlined today will help to move forward this debate that is so important to the American people.

“Obviously, the bill that Senator Baucus proposes is just that – a proposal. The Finance Committee will have its markup next week, and I know a number of members will have amendments they will want to offer, and changes they will want to make. The measures by which I judge any bill will remain the same: will it provide robust, comprehensive and affordable coverage to all Americans and will it place primary emphasis on prevention and wellness.

“This is a positive development. The HELP Committee completed its health reform markup in July, and we have been eager to get to the Senate floor. Once the Finance Committee reports out a bill, our two committees can begin the process of merging those two measures, and we can finally begin floor consideration. Each day we wait to enact health reform, 14,000 Americans lose their health insurance – over 70 per day in my home state of Iowa alone.

“I remain optimistic that we will pass a strong, comprehensive health reform bill. And we will do so before Congress adjourns for the year.”

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